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Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4363rd meeting

Friday, 31 August 2001, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Fernández de Soto	(Colombia)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Amin
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali	Mr. Kassé
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Hume

Agenda

Wrap up discussion on the work of the Security Council for the current month

Letter dated 27 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/822).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-52542 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Wrap-up discussion on the work of the Security Council for the current month

Letter dated 27 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/822)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I would like to remind members of the Council of the objectives and suggested issues for this meeting. Generally, this meeting will provide an unusual opportunity to access critically the ways and means used by the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security.

More specifically, however, in keeping with the annex to the letter circulated by Ambassador Valdivieso, this meeting will attempt to reflect on the particular experiences of the work of the Council during the month of August that may contribute to enhancing the quality and political relevance of the work of the Council in the immediate future, and, secondly, to reaffirm monthly presidencies as interconnected and interdependent occurrences and not as isolated happenings.

In that context, Council members may wish to refer to lessons arising from the consideration of this month's agenda as well as to procedural issues such as the conduct of the work of the month — transparency, the provisional programme and schedules — the quality and pertinence of the oral briefings presented to the Council by the Secretariat and, possibly, the contents of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. In addition, Council members may wish to refer to the usefulness of meetings such as the one convened this month on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa.

I invite members of the Council to contribute to the discussion with brief, frank, focused and pointed statements, preferably on the issues outlined just a moment ago.

As President of the Council, I must point out that Colombia does not believe that this meeting is an opportunity to reiterate national positions on substantive items discussed during the month. With this brief introduction I shall now give the floor to members of the Council who have expressed a desire to speak.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Please allow me to begin by expressing our personal delight at seeing you back in the Chair, Mr. Minister. We know that you have a busy schedule, and we are very glad that you have taken time from it to be here with us. We are also very pleased that you have organized this wrap-up meeting, because we think that it can be a very useful addition to the work of the Council. Let me also say that we were supposed to have a very quiet, sleepy month in August, but it turned out to be quite busy and hectic.

Following your suggestion, Mr. President, that we should make brief, focused, frank interventions, I will confine myself to making three points and will not cover the whole agenda for the month. I wanted to highlight the following three points because I thought they were noteworthy. Perhaps the wider membership might want to take note of these events that took place during your presidency.

Let me begin with the discussions that took place early this month at the Princeton Club on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa. Here again, Sir, I commend you for participating personally in that meeting. I found those discussions useful in at least two ways. First, in terms of procedure, it was an eye-opener that if you take the same group of people and move them to a slightly different location without this formal setting, you can have a much more substantive discussion. I thought that the discussions that we held on that day were far more candid than most of those that we have had in this Chamber. Therefore, I think that this was a useful innovation, which, I hope, other presidencies will carry on. As you yourself said, Sir, these presidencies are interconnected. So where we have useful innovations in one presidency, we hope that they will be carried forward in the future.

That discussion was useful not just in procedural but also in substantive terms. One of the key conclusions that I brought back from the discussion that morning was that if we are going to find solutions to many of the key, difficult items on our agenda, we cannot just view them nationally. We have to view them regionally. The classic cases that were mentioned that morning at the Princeton Club included West Africa, where the problems of Sierra Leone and Liberia and the Mano River Union area flow into each other, and we have to take a regional approach. Of course, the mission that the Secretary-General sent, which was led by Assistant Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall, reconfirmed that regional approaches are needed. Of course, you need a similar regional approach in the Great Lakes region. That is something that I think the Council has taken cognizance of.

One other point along those lines is that these regional approaches should not be confined only to Africa. They can be extended to other regions. Frankly, in the last two months, we have had another vivid lesson of this, when we saw how the problems in Kosovo had spilled over into Macedonia. By just focusing on Kosovo in our discussions, perhaps we missed the regional dimension. I hope that the discussion you organized at the Princeton Club, Sir, will leave a lasting legacy of guiding the Council always to factor in the regional dimension in its deliberations.

Secondly, I would like to commend Colombia's presidency for completing work on the resolution on prevention of armed conflict. As we all know, that was a commendable initiative by the delegation of Bangladesh. The number of hours that Bangladesh has put in to ensure that the resolution was completed is amazing, and we would like to commend that delegation. But there is one small point that we would like to draw to the attention of non-members of the Council, which is one small paragraph: the eighteenth preambular paragraph. I would like to read it aloud. It reads as follows:

> "Reiterating the shared commitment to save people from the ravages of armed conflicts, acknowledging the lessons to be learned for all concerned from the failure of preventive efforts that preceded such tragedies as the genocide in Rwanda (S/1999/1257) and the massacre in Srebrenica (A/54/549), and resolving to take appropriate action within its competence, combined with the efforts of Member States, to prevent the recurrence of such tragedies". (*resolution 1366 (2001)*)

That is, in our view, a very significant paragraph, because, frankly, the track record of this Council on conflict prevention has not been a glorious one. It has failed to spot many conflicts and serious situations. I think that the commitment that we made in that resolution as a whole, and also in this particular paragraph, is something that members of the Council should take note of. Non-members too should take note of it, because they should remind the Council that this is a commitment that it has taken on board by adopting this resolution.

My third and final point refers to the discussion we had yesterday afternoon in informal consultations. I do not know whether it was intended to be really substantive or pro forma, but I thought we ended up having a very substantive and meaningful discussion of the meeting that took place among the representatives of Bangladesh, the United Kingdom and Colombia, who represented the Security Council in the 13 June meeting with the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council.

I flag this because, as we all know, many of the discussions that take place in the informal consultations are leaked, and sometimes we are uncomfortable about that. But this time, I hope that the discussions will be fully leaked to everybody, because we actually had many useful interventions. I will not soon forget the rather eloquent intervention by Ambassador Ward — which we are used to — and the passionate intervention by Ambassador Wegger Strømmen — which we are not used to – on the subject we discussed.

I think it is important for us not to see these discussions just as theoretical sessions, but as sessions that should over time have an impact on the actual work of the Council with a view to improving its working methods. Clearly, this institution, like any other, is not perfect. It is a human institution; it needs improvement. I thought that many useful suggestions for improvements were put forward yesterday, and I hope that some way will be found, as part of the President's principle of interconnected presidencies, to use some of the ideas from that discussion for future

presidencies. Of course, we are specifically looking to the presidency of France in September.

At the end of the discussion there was no decision, but I was pleased that there seemed to be a kind of implicit commitment that, first, we should try to complete the tremendous work that Ambassador Chowdhury has done in the working group on sanctions. Ambassador Chowdhury has put in an enormous number of hours. I think the time has come to bring his work to fruition, and I hope that will happen in September. And secondly, as suggested by one colleague — either France or the United Kingdom, I believe — if we are going to discuss the question of the speakers' list, it should be referred to the informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions. I hope that too will be done.

Those were just two minor results of the discussion yesterday. The larger discussion yesterday was about how we can ensure that the Security Council is perceived by the rest of the United Nations community to be dynamic and to be changing in response to the needs of the day, and in response to all the feedback we are getting from the rest of the United Nations community.

Once again, Sir, we congratulate you on a very successful presidency.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Singapore for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We welcome you, Sir, as you preside over today's wrap-up discussion. The Chinese delegation appreciates the work of Ambassador Valdivieso and congratulates him on his successful presidency this month.

The Security Council considered a number of agenda items in accordance with a well-prepared plan and in a coordinated orderly manner. Notably, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Fernández de Soto, personally presided over the Council's open debate on small arms, on the basis of which the Council today adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2001/21). We greatly appreciate Colombia's efforts on that issue and the role it has played.

Africa was one focus of the Security Council's work in August. Beyond the Council's consultations on some of the hot spots in that region, members also held a meeting with the International Peace Academy on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa. Ambassador Mahbubani made reference to this, and I endorse his views on the subject. China too attached great importance to that meeting and hopes that its positive outcome will be effectively implemented.

I wish also to state my views on the open debate on Palestinian-Israeli violence, a debate which was timely and necessary. The Council bears responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should take prompt and active measures in response to the deteriorating situation, and should help to quell the violence and to maintain peace and security in the Middle East. Especially over the past few months, the Council spent a great deal of time consulting on a draft resolution on the prevention of armed conflict. But faced with an actual conflict, the Council ought not to stand idly by. I need hardly ask what kind of impression that would leave with the international community.

But following the open debate on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Council did not play its proper role, which was regrettable. I must put on record that this was not the fault of the President.

I wish in conclusion to note that Ambassador Valdivieso, as Chairman of the Afghanistan sanctions committee, has done a great deal to bring the Afghan issue to the attention of the Council, and we greatly appreciate his efforts in that regard. We look forward to the Council maintaining the momentum in its consideration of the Afghan issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of China for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I endorse the words of welcome addressed to you, Mr. President. We are very happy to see you here, and are very pleased at the constant attention you devote to the work of the Security Council.

As the President requested, we will not repeat the substance of our positions on the items discussed by the Security Council in August. I wish only to say that characteristics of Colombia's presidency of the Security Council were clarity in the organization of our work, a highly rational style, and persistence in working to attain the goals that had been set.

It was not possible, of course, to attain those goals on all the issues that were before the Council. Ambassador Wang Yingfan has just mentioned one example of where the Security Council was unable to reach a decision. But in most cases, as I said, the August presidency succeeded in obtaining results.

We are pleased also to note that all meetings of the Security Council, both formal meetings and consultations, had sensible, well-thought-out agendas setting out specific issues, not general or theoretical considerations. That is of particular importance to my delegation; we have constantly argued in favour of such an approach to the Council's activities. We would not like the Council to duplicate debates held in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or other bodies. We are grateful that, as President, Colombia drew a clear line between the competencies of the Security Council and those of other intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations.

A very good example of this is the statement that the Council has just issued on small arms. In July of this year, hardly a month ago, a conference was held on this problem, and it adopted a final document. It seemed that it would be very difficult for the Security Council not to repeat what had already been done at that conference. Nevertheless, the statement that we issued today has a specific nature that is unique to the Security Council. It does not duplicate the decisions of the General Assembly. It defines ways that the Security Council can in the future contribute to addressing this problem in accordance with its mandate and without impinging on the competence of other bodies. The substantial discussions on the problem of small arms and light weapons — discussions which you presided over, Sir — contributed greatly to this outcome.

I will limit myself to these remarks. In conclusion, once again I would like to congratulate and sincerely thank the entire Colombian delegation, Ambassador Valdivieso and yourself, Mr. Minister, for the attention you have given to the work of the Security Council in August. This has contributed greatly to the successful outcome of our work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words he has addressed to the Colombian minister, Ambassador Valdivieso and our mission.

Mr. Strømmen (Norway): Let me start by commending you, Sir, for the manner in which Colombia has conducted the presidency of the Security Council during the month of August and by saying how pleased I am to see you, Mr. Foreign Minister, chairing the Council this morning.

I have a few points to make. Colombia's maintaining a balanced approach to the work of the Council and delivering on the agenda established at the beginning of the month has been important. Yet at the same time, your presidency has displayed flexibility in taking up emerging issues in an appropriate manner. Following your example, emerging issues should to the extent possible be tackled without compromising or delaying the consideration of matters that have already been scheduled on the Council's agenda. Unfortunately, we have on previous occasions seen examples of a certain degree of marginalization of already scheduled matters. Sometimes this is indeed unavoidable. However, Colombia has demonstrated this month that it is possible to cover all bases.

Let me also commend you for having convened an informal working session this month on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa. This is a very interesting topic in itself, and given the importance of finding ways to more effectively address peace and security in Africa, it was absolutely timely. We believe that the largely interconnected nature of conflicts and their root causes in that part of the world must be borne in mind in order to arrive at effective and sustainable solutions. Furthermore, this type of working session, involving a broad range of actors from within and outside the United Nations system, is conducive to open-minded and comprehensive exchanges of information and views.

In a similar manner, the Arria formula meetings — allowing non-governmental organizations, special rapporteurs and others to brief and interact with Council members — are important and should continue to be used to broaden the scope of the background information made available to us.

The thematic issue — small arms — that you wisely chose for the month of August is of great importance for security, humanitarian and development conditions worldwide. Practical disarmament measures are indispensable to any peace-building mission and are also a necessity in order to avoid regional spillover effects in conflict areas. You have our full support in the future process of tackling the issue of small arms.

As a more general note, let me underscore the importance and necessity of the selected thematic issues having co-sponsors in the Council in order to ensure their follow-up. This need illustrates the high degree to which monthly presidencies must be seen as interconnected and interdependent.

Regarding the presidential statement issued today concerning small arms, I must, however, confess that in our view the text is somewhat voluminous and therefore unnecessarily cumbersome to comprehend. In order to maximize political impact we should strive to make our statements more condensed and focused in the future. This is a general observation and, needless to say, has nothing to do with the subject matter at hand.

On all issues, the Council must above all act in a results-oriented fashion. The Council must respond swiftly to major developments concerning international peace and security in all cases where doing so can positively influence the efforts for peace on the ground. In order to have maximum influence, it is important that the Council speak with a unified voice. When divisions in the Council are displayed, its influence can only be diminished. In this regard, I commend your delegation once again for having facilitated an expedient and unanimous response by the Council to the signing of the Framework Agreement concerning Macedonia on 13 August.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Norway for his kind words.

Mr. Ward (Jamaica): First, I extend my congratulations to you, Sir, to Ambassador Valdivieso, your delegation and to Colombia for the excellent manner in which the affairs of the Security Council were conducted during the month of August. I also thank Ambassador Valdivieso for providing guidelines for today's wrap-up session.

In keeping with your request, I will restrict my comments to the issues mooted in your paper. First, on the meeting at the Princeton Club on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa, I will say that meetings such as this one afford members of the Security Council an opportunity to expansively discuss issues of great importance to the Council, while benefiting from the perspective of outside expertise. The Council's knowledge base is increased by these experiences.

Perhaps there are two ways to increase the benefit from these meetings. One would be for Council members to be accompanied at these meetings by their experts on the subject matter. A second would be for a substantive report on the meeting to be prepared and distributed to members shortly following the meeting.

My second point is on friends groups. At the wrap-up session at the end of June, the delegation of Singapore raised questions concerning the modus operandi of the so-called friends groups. Singapore's call for a discussion of this issue was supported by Ireland and Jamaica. The concerns remain, and two months have passed without a substantive discussion of this issue. If there are valid reasons to retain the current practice, then it is incumbent on the proponents to be prepared to explain those reasons to the Council.

Regarding the Secretariat's briefing notes, I will note that members of the Council have in the past requested the Secretariat to make available the briefing notes for consultations of the whole. The Secretariat's response has been the circulation of background notes, which have proven quite useful but which lack the analysis provided during the briefings. We maintain that it would be worthwhile to renew our request to the Secretariat for notes that contain analysis.

On the question of cooperation between presidencies, while to the outside world the operations of the Security Council seem a continuous process, there is indeed a hiatus between presidencies, except when there is an urgent need for a meeting in the first few days of the month. The culture of the Security Council is for each delegation to seek to leave an impression on the work of the Council. Each presidency, for the most part, controls to a large extent the programme of work and sets its own objective. This may be in the form of a thematic issue: promoting transparency, reforming the practices and procedures of the Council, focusing attention on a particular conflict or region, a combination of these, or simply maintaining the status quo.

We have seen, however, cooperation from one presidency to the next in the planning for Security Council missions or special meetings. We have also seen carryover negotiations of outcome documents. For example, the Bangladesh presidency held a meeting on the prevention of armed conflict, subsequently introduced a draft resolution, and led the negotiations on a text and its adoption two presidencies later. We

also have the cooperation currently taking place between the future presidencies of France and Ireland on the proposed meeting of the Council with the Lusaka political committee. These and similar initiatives should be encouraged.

The next item we would like to comment on is the threat or use of the veto. The data will show that the veto is not often used in the Security Council. That data, however, belies the fact that the mere presence of the threat of the veto or its possible use more often than not determines the way the Council conducts its business. The mere threat of the veto can be used for narrow political interests, to the detriment of the Council in carrying out its responsibilities to the international community. We should seek to avoid this.

My delegation holds the veto to be undemocratic. It is even more so when the mere threat of its use stymies even a serious discussion of possible action to be taken on an issue. As recently as last week, due to the mere threat of the veto, the Council failed to consider meaningful action on the issue of the occupied Palestinian territories. As elected members of the Council, we must ask ourselves whether we surrender to such threatened use of the veto or if we pursue our objectives without fear of its use. Should we allow others to hide behind the threatened use of the veto to lock the Council into non-action? It is my view that, at a minimum, the permanent members of the Council have an obligation to require full discussion of the substance of any issue on which another permanent member has threatened a veto before the issue is appropriately discussed.

Finally, the value of the wrap-up session we are having today will be greatly enhanced by the President's decision to prepare a summary of the discussions for distribution to Council members. I trust it will be available to all Members of the United Nations. It is my hope that the Council will set aside time for meaningful discussions of some of the issues raised today and that solutions will be found for the problems identified. For example, a meeting such as the one at the Princeton Club may be a useful format for dealing with some of these issues in the future.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Jamaica for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Kassé (Mali) *(spoke in French)*: Allow me, Mr. Minister, to tell you how satisfied my delegation is at seeing you preside over our meeting. Mr. President, I would like to thank you for having organized this meeting. I shall confine myself to one single point that is of interest to my delegation.

Today, in seeking to increase the effectiveness of the Council, we have to work in the direction of improving and streamlining our relationship with other organs of the United Nations, the regional organizations and the troop-contributing countries. On the whole, these relationships are not negative; the Security Council is becoming more and more transparent and more open to partnerships. But it is true that we can always do more to improve the effectiveness of the Council and thus strengthen our relationships with our partners.

Resolution 1353 (2001), which is the outcome of the working group chaired by Ambassador Ward of Jamaica — and we congratulate him once again — is a very good foundation. Let us examine it carefully and not waste any time in implementing it, with the active participation of the troop-contributing countries, who are our partners from now on.

As the Council, we must encourage regular meetings with other United Nations bodies and the regional organizations. Here, I must pay tribute, Mr. President, to your initiative in organizing the seminar on regional approaches in Africa. The meeting on 13 June between the three ambassadors of the Council and the working group on reform was also extremely positive. We must continue to speak candidly among ourselves, because reform is an issue that concerns all Member States.

This is what my delegation wishes to say today. Once again, please allow me to congratulate you very warmly, Mr. President, as well as your excellent team on the Council and, of course, the one that won the Copa americana.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Mali. I particularly appreciated the latter part of your congratulations.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): Let me first of all congratulate Ambassador Valdivieso and the delegation of Colombia on the successful conclusion of the presidency. Thank you for the efficient and professional performance of your presidential duties that facilitated our work this month and contributed

greatly to the constructive consideration of the issues on the Council's agenda.

One should recognize that in this month the Council effectively continued applying in its work all the good traditions and innovative approaches that have evolved over the past years, thus strengthening and building upon the trend toward greater transparency and better working methods developed in the successive presidencies.

I would particularly like to note here the holding of the informal policy forum devoted to the deliberations on regional approaches to managing conflicts in Africa. This informal gathering allowed Council members to have an open and frank exchange of views on the pros and cons of the strategies that the Council adopts. We believe that such informal debates and brainstorming sessions are very useful and should be continued.

We cannot but mention here the initiative of the Colombian presidency to hold an open Council debate on small arms, following the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This timely event — with wide participation among Members of the United Nations — and the adoption of the presidential statement once again highlighted the areas where the Council has a role to play in addressing the issue of small arms.

As far as the Secretariat's briefings are concerned, we particularly welcome what has almost become a customary practice — the circulation of briefings and briefing notes before the Council hears the Secretariat's briefing and considers the agenda item. We would encourage the Secretariat to apply such an approach to all agenda items under consideration.

We regard yesterday's adoption of resolution 1366 (2001), which was based on the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574) and which followed up the debate held in June, to be among the major positive results that the Council achieved in August. In our judgement, that resolution is a noteworthy document in which the Council recognizes the importance of a conflict-prevention strategy and outlines the ways to implement a number of the Secretary-General's recommendations relating to the role of the Security Council and other players. Now it is important to make the resolution work.

The record of the Council will always be mixed. There are, of course, successes; sometimes there are failures. In our view, one of the major events for the Council in the past month — this was mentioned by some earlier speakers — was the urgent meeting held on 20 and 21 August on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The tragic course of events in that region required an immediate reaction on the part of the Council, and the convening of the meeting by the President at the request of the Islamic group was timely and was the right decision.

The effectiveness of the Council's reaction to the situation was, however, once again undermined by its inability to act. It is truly regrettable that the Council demonstrated that it was not in a position to reach a unanimous decision on an outcome document following that urgent meeting. The inability of the Council to adopt such a decision aimed at putting a stop to the ongoing violence and bloodshed in the Palestinian territory and in Israel and at bringing the parties back to the negotiating table can really be viewed as the failure of the Security Council as a body to fulfil its Charter obligations. It did not serve the Council's image well, and it sent a very wrong signal to the parties on the ground.

I have deliberately not touched in my statement on the issue of the contents of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, as mentioned in the paper on the wrap-up meeting. It is evident that over the past several years, steps have been taken to improve both the contents and the format of the Council's report. Yet a lot remains to be done to make it better and — no less important — reader-friendly. Many options may be explored here, from asking the Secretary-General to prepare a yearly assessment, as suggested by some Council members during our previous consultations, to streamlining specific chapters and paragraphs of the report. I do not think that such a discussion would be useful without the participation of the wider United Nations membership, to which the reports are directed. But it is important that we hold a separate discussion within the Council following the review of the report in the General Assembly to consider in a practical manner concerns and proposals voiced during the Assembly's debate.

I also wish to lend my full support to what was said by Ambassador Mahbubani and other speakers regarding the importance of finalizing, hopefully within the next month, the work on the draft report of

the working group on sanctions. We urge the next presidency to allocate sufficient time for relevant discussion in the Council on that issue.

Finally, I should like once again to voice our full support for conducting wrap-up discussions, especially for conducting them in open meetings of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Ukraine for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): I, like others, would like to say how glad we are to see you, Sir, presiding over our deliberations again today. I should also like to very warmly praise the dynamic and at all times courteous and efficient leadership by Colombia — Ambassador Valdivieso and everyone involved in the Colombian team — of the Council over the past month. It was a presidency marked at all times not only by efficiency but by consideration of different viewpoints and courtesy, thereby contributing greatly to the work of the Council this month. My delegation has greatly appreciated it.

I would also like to thank the presidency for this wrap-up discussion; it is a very useful and worthwhile initiative. Held periodically, it can allow the Council to take stock of the issues before it and of its approach to them. We therefore welcome it. I would also like to say that we found very valuable three particular themes that have been mentioned by other members this morning — these were referred to in the paper circulated before the meeting.

The first was the Princeton Club discussion on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa. Events such as that allow for an intellectual analysis and a conceptual approach to issues that can often be lost in the day-to-day details, and we felt that it was very useful.

My delegation would also very much like to welcome the open debate held earlier this month on small arms that led to the presidential statement we have just adopted, and also to congratulate the presidency on concluding work on the resolution on conflict prevention, in which, of course, Bangladesh was instrumental at an earlier stage, as it was throughout the process, in advancing the issue.

The point has rightly been made that all presidencies are interconnected. That theme emerged this month. Clarity of focus was provided by the presidency as we approached our work, in particular on issues such as East Timor and Kosovo, in view of the impending elections; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which we discussed yesterday; and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which we discussed following the Framework Agreement of 13 August. That led to a presidential statement of support, which my delegation warmly welcomed.

In the context of the discussion on the Middle East, which was mentioned by several earlier speakers, Ireland felt that it was fully appropriate for the Council to hold the discussion, given the circumstances and the fact that members — and other Member States — were given the opportunity to state their views on the situation. We heard many constructive statements during the debate. We share the view that it was unfortunate that the Council was unable to speak collectively on the matter.

In terms of procedure, I would like to echo briefly two or three points that have already been made. First, my delegation welcomes the increasing practice by the Secretariat, which we experienced several times this month, of producing more written material in advance of meetings and restricting the oral presentations to providing, in general terms, an overview of the situation. This is especially relevant in the case of particular agenda items that appear regularly — monthly, in terms of the Council agenda. We would also tend to favour, if it were possible, the provision in advance of more detailed briefing notes, which at times might allow the Council to deal with issues more rapidly. This is not in any sense a criticism — we find the notes very helpful. Such a practice would be a purely procedural measure that would, perhaps, allow more substantive contributions by Council members and also enable the issue to be dealt with at times more expeditiously, given the number of speakers on many issues.

Secondly — and this has arisen before in our consideration of procedure — it is clear that certain items need not be addressed every month.

My delegation has taken the view that, as a general rule, items should be addressed only when there is something specific to report on. Otherwise, they can be dealt with under any other business. This was also a feature of this month, and it is something that we welcomed.

In conclusion, there is always — each month, but beyond that, in the ongoing work of the Council and in the interconnection between presidencies — a balance of substance and procedure. It is not always easy to achieve the right balance. We felt that this balance was achieved this month. For that reason, we warmly congratulate the presidency.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Ireland for his comments on the work of our delegation.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish to tell you, Sir, that we are very happy to have you as President for the second time in the course of this month. I would also like to say how happy we have been to work with the excellent Colombian presidency through the month of August, headed by Ambassador Valdivieso and all his team. I would like to thank Ambassador Valdivieso for the small note he read out to us to introduce today's public debate, which seemed to us to be very useful. There are just a few points touched upon in that note that I would like to comment on.

First, is the issue of the transparency and openness of our work to the whole of the membership of the United Nations. We believe that the current trend to greater transparency and more public meetings is a good trend, and my delegation is entirely in favour of that. There is a large number of cases in which we have everything to gain from acting in the most transparent way possible, including subjects on which political declarations are awaited on sensitive issues. In that respect, the public debate we had on the Middle East under the Colombian presidency was very important. As several speakers have said already, that issue of the Middle East remains open, and my delegation also shares some of the frustrations that have been aired here about the fact that the Security Council was not able to take a stand on that important question, which remains open, as the Council was reminded just now by the Ambassador of China.

However, within the framework of these public meetings, we can also have public meetings of the Security Council with the participation of non-members of the Council, but on subjects for which it is possible to have a greater degree of interactivity and a less formal structure. That kind of meeting, rather like the kind of meeting held yesterday on the Democratic Republic of Congo, is very much welcomed by my delegation: interactive public meetings, as often as possible. It is a good idea and should be employed more often.

Secondly, we are also in favour of increasing relationships between the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries on peacekeeping matters. We cannot assemble, develop or modify a peacekeeping operation unless we have full understanding, consultation and cooperation with the troop-contributing countries. From this point of view, my delegation would be entirely in favour of the implementation of resolution 1353 (2001), as the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Ward of Jamaica recently requested.

An interesting case is perhaps that of Timor. In the near future we will have to examine the evolution of the United Nations presence, in the context of independence and of after independence. We should work much more closely with the troop-contributing countries.

Thirdly, there was an excellent and very useful seminar at the Princeton Club on the regional approach, the regional dimension. I think it was very useful. The Security Council should more often work in concert with regional actors, as we have done several times with Economic Community of West African States for Sierra Leone and the region; as we have done for the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the signatory countries of the Lusaka Agreement; and, in an interdependent manner, with the upcoming presidency of Ireland in October, when we will hold another meeting between the Security Council and the signatory countries of the Lusaka Agreement, in order to give expression to the regional approach we discussed at the Princeton Club.

I believe it was Ambassador Mahbubani who said this regional approach could also be valuable for other regions beyond Africa. Perhaps he was thinking of Afghanistan, a question on which some countries have suggested the Security Council might meet the members of the "Six plus Two" group.

My fourth point relates to the sanctions policy, which was raised by several delegations who expressed the hope that the excellent report prepared by Ambassador Chowdhury might see the light of day and achieve consensus. We share this concern, expressed by several delegations.

I would like to comment on a point raised by one or two delegations, in particular the delegation of Jamaica, on the groups of friends. We believe that groups of friends, which include members and non-members of the Security Council — including, in some cases, countries contributing troops to a particular peacekeeping operation — have demonstrated their usefulness, but we are willing to continue exchanging views on this subject with delegations that would like to look further into their functioning.

I will not go on at greater length. I thank you, Mr. President, for having given us the opportunity to speak in public today on the subject of the methods of work of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of France for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Amin (Bangladesh): It is a distinct honour and a privilege for us to have you preside over the Council meeting this morning. We give you our warm congratulations on the successful conclusion of the Colombian presidency of the Security Council, and we pay special tribute to Ambassador Valdivieso and his admirable team.

I am making this statement on behalf of Ambassador Chowdhury, who is unable to participate in this meeting.

This month's programme demonstrated much diligence. Under your leadership, we have addressed all issues regarding Security Council action or review in August. It is good that we have this wrap-up session today. It is good that we are holding this meeting in public, so that the United Nations membership and the public know how the Council members assess their own work over the month, consider follow-up and reflect on the future course of action.

Mr. President, you have invited us to focus on two themes: first, our experience in relation to the political relevance of the work of the Council, and secondly, the continuity of and follow-up to our work. I will remain within this framework in our intervention.

First, I will comment on our experience in relation to the political relevance of the work of the Council. Bangladesh has always stressed the need to make the Council more proactive. This is essential to assert Council's primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this context, I would like to say that the Council debate on small arms, which was followed by the presidential statement issued this morning, was the right initiative.

In our last wrap-up meeting, on 29 June, we underlined that the Council should reflect on how to remain seized of the issues before it in a proactive manner, as a conscious policy decision, and not only as routine calendar events determined by the publication of a report, a briefing by the Secretariat or the renewal of a peacekeeping mandate.

It was in this spirit that we took up the situation in Burundi early in the month of June, although the Secretariat was not ready to provide everything, in order to respond to the situation as reported back to us by the Council mission to the Great Lakes region. We believe that the consideration of issues should be determined by the exigencies of the situation on the ground.

We do not intend to go through the substantive content of this month's programme, but I want to mention one more thing: the adoption yesterday of resolution 1366 (2001) was a landmark event. This is the first time that the Council has committed itself in a resolution to specific preventive actions. The process that was initiated in November 1999 under the presidency of Ambassador Danilo Türk of Slovenia, was followed up — and happily so — in July 2000 under the Jamaican presidency. A concrete result was achieved on the basis of the report by the Secretary-General (S/2001/574), a report on which Bangladesh was privileged to initiate action in June. We must pay attention to the implementation of resolution 1366 (2001). Several delegations, including those of Singapore, Jamaica and Ukraine, spoke eloquently on the significance of the resolution.

You also asked us to comment, Sir, on the usefulness of our participation in such intellectual forums as the Princeton Club meeting. We found the seminar to be immensely instructive. I believe we should have similar brainstorming — and, if I may say, soul-searching — sessions on some of the other complex issues before the Council, on which the Council has difficulty taking action. Encounters between academia and the bureaucratic world will certainly contribute to a better understanding of issues and to better decision-making by the Security Council.

The second point for our discussion concerns continuity and follow-up of the Council's work. The

usefulness of the monthly wrap-up meeting lies largely in ensuring continuity and in reflecting on the follow-up of our discussions and decisions. We know that Council decisions are not self-implementable. The Secretariat is in charge of overseeing the implementation and execution of those decisions, but there are matters that have to be followed up by the Council itself — matters to be pursued by the Council as a body collectively and by individual Council members.

At the last wrap-up meeting, we stressed two points in that regard. The Council should systematically follow up its decisions and see that necessary support is secured to implement those decisions. The Council should also ensure that the Secretary-General is given the human, material and financial resources to implement its decisions.

Continuity is particularly important for the initiatives taken by the elected members. We have mentioned the case of conflict prevention, where the hand-off from an outgoing to an incoming member has worked well. Our discussion yesterday in the informal consultations, the points being raised here today, the ideas floated in other discussions, such as the Council retreat and the "15-plus-15" luncheon, should not be left in the air — or in the summary of discussions that is circulated.

There are a number of issues already on the table — the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, the Council's relations with the press and the media and so on. All these issues need to be studied and transformed into operational decisions.

We believe, as we stated earlier, that the Council's informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions was established with that imperative in view. We have therefore been recommending that the working group should meet regularly to review the implementation of relevant decisions and to follow up the ideas discussed, and also to explore improvement of the working methods and documentation of the Council.

The Council should be responsive to the concerns of the United Nations membership at large on its working methods. One way would be to have its working group look into the documents of the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council and report to the Council, so that when Council representatives participate in future meetings of the Open-ended Working Group they can provide specific briefings. We are happy to have heard support expressed for that proposal at today's meeting.

Finally, I wish to express our gratitude for the appreciation expressed by several delegations for the efforts made by the delegation of Bangladesh, and, in particular, by Ambassador Chowdhury, in various areas, especially, as Chairman of the working group on sanctions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Bangladesh for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is extremely pleased, Sir, to see you again presiding over the work of the Council this month and also to thank you again for the initiative you are taking as part of the process of transparency that each one of us — as members of the Security Council and other Member States present here — would like to instil into the work of the Council. Perhaps it might even be possible one day to think of opening up this kind of debate to general participation by all Members that wish to participate. They are all actors following the affairs of the world, in particular with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security, and they would all like to know what the Security Council is doing from day to day to keep the peace and to maintain security throughout the world as well as to participate in a frank and transparent exchange of views on the appropriate way for the Security Council, representing the conscience of humanity, to deal with all matters of international peace and security. They would also like to say — and, indeed, why not — why the Security Council has failed, if it has failed, to shoulder its responsibilities in this particular area of its competence.

All my colleagues have discussed how the Council, under the presidency of Colombia and thanks to the skill of Ambassador Valdivieso and his very able team, has acquitted itself of its responsibilities on the items on its agenda during the month of August.

For my part, I would here like to refer to one set of issues that is a constant puzzle for many delegations and that is food for wide reflection. It is a simple

subject. It concerns the lethargy of the Security Council in regard to what is happening in the Middle East. The situation in that region is declining from day to day, but the Council constantly sends erroneous signals to the protagonists in the conflict. The Council sometimes hurries forward and skips certain stages in reacting to a conflict, and we note an incomprehensible activism, for instance when it comes to imposing or strengthening sanctions when more appropriate means could be used. But then we see the same Security Council totally ignoring other explosive situations.

Looking at the Council's agenda for the month, we note that the situation in the Middle East and in the occupied territories has been considered on four occasions: 20, 21, 23 and 24 August.

But what was the outcome of those four days of work? They resulted in false signals sent to the parties to the conflict and in a sense of desolation that has been building since 24 August, the last time the Council examined the issue in informal consultations.

My delegation will not dwell on the issue of the situation in the occupied territories once again, but would nevertheless like to underline that the Council has shown itself incapable of shouldering its responsibilities in this regard. That is regrettable in view of the tragic situation of the Palestinian people, and, in particular, in the light of the threat that today hangs over the whole region. The Council, all of us, and all Member States should ponder this seriously.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Allow me first of all, Mr. Minister, to thank you for presiding over the work of the Security Council today. We were also very appreciative of your personal presence during the open debate on small arms and the meeting on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa. Your personal contribution has been invaluable and underscores the commitment of Colombia to global disarmament and international peace and security.

Let me also express our heartiest congratulations to Ambassador Valdivieso on the professional and exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the Council in both informal and formal meetings, making the Colombian presidency a very successful one indeed.

The easy-going qualities that usually characterize the month of August at the United Nations, and in the Security Council in particular, gave way to some very important debates in the Council under the Colombian presidency. Indeed, we had very useful informal consultations on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and on Liberia, as well as an important and urgent public meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

We regret, however, that despite the very wide participation and the intense debate on the latter issue, the Council was unable to agree on an outcome document. That is indeed very unfortunate given the gravity of the situation on the ground. We really have to address this issue in the future.

We commend you, Sir, for including in the programme of work for the month of August a number of issues that have required the continued attention of the Council. Issues pertaining to the situations in Sierra Leone, East Timor, Burundi, Kosovo, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were discussed, and the Council was updated on the latest situation in those countries. Indeed, my delegation favours such an approach, where the change in presidency is seen as the continuation of a process aimed at advancing the Council's action on various issues rather than as a specific, separate and isolated event.

We support the idea of new approaches and new topics that can improve our working methods and enrich our deliberations. That is why we would like to place on record our appreciation to you, Sir, for holding the open debate on small arms, which followed closely the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The open debate was a very good opportunity to focus our discussions on some specific aspects of the proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons insofar as they have an impact upon the initiatives of the Security Council in the field of conflict prevention and resolution. We are pleased that our discussions led to the adoption of a presidential statement earlier today.

We now look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on ways and means by which the Council may contribute to addressing the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in situations under its consideration.

I also wish to commend you, Sir, for the initiative of organizing the meeting on regional approaches to conflict management in Africa, held at the Princeton Club. That meeting proved to be extremely interesting and most useful. The participation of members of academia and others allowed for an open, candid and frank discussion on the subject, which would not have been possible in this Chamber or in our own consultation room. The meeting provided us with new perspectives on approaches to conflicts in Africa, which we hope the Council will take into account in its future decisions.

We also appreciate the opportunity, which the Colombian presidency provided, for a very fruitful discussion on a comprehensive approach to the problem in Afghanistan. We hope that a consensus will emerge on the necessity to address this problem in a holistic manner.

The informal meeting that we had yesterday afternoon enabled Council members to be briefed on the exchange of views between some Council members and the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, which took place on 13 June 2001. That briefing led to some very passionate discussions among members, which we hope will continue in the future. The topics discussed yesterday included simple issues such the speakers list and important ones such as the question of the transparency and accountability of the Security Council. It is indeed very important that we create a culture of learning through self-criticism in the Council, which would make our work more effective and would enhance our credibility vis-à-vis the broader membership of the United Nations.

I also wish to thank you warmly, Mr. President, for the Colombian hospitality that we have enjoyed throughout August. The coffee and sweets provided by the Colombian mission helped stimulate and sweeten the deliberations in the Council. We are grateful for that.

Finally, I wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the whole staff of the Colombian Mission, and in particular the coordinator, Ambassador Franco, for their very hard work and professionalism in making the Colombian presidency a success.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Mauritius for his kind words addressed to my delegation. I hope that all delegations have been enjoying the Colombian coffee or, if not, that they will be able to do so in the coming days.

Mr. Hume (United States of America): First, I would like to assure you, Sir, that I take every opportunity I can, here or outside the United Nations, to enjoy Colombian coffee. We are very grateful and pleased at your presence here and at the leadership of the Colombian delegation during this month. Here, we associate ourselves fully with the comments made by colleagues.

Fortunately, there have already been many interesting comments which give reason for reflection. Most of them, I think, are shared by most members here. That will allow me to be relatively brief in what I say. Not mentioning something does not mean that I disagree with it. I just want to make one or two comments on points that have already been made.

First, I would like simply to state — because it is already apparent from the discussion here — that the Council is constantly faced with a dilemma in how it organizes its work. Most members of the Council, or all who have spoken, have rightly thanked the Colombian delegation for organizing a meeting of members of the Council at the Princeton Club: someplace away from the United Nations. They have described the benefit of that meeting variously as brainstorming and soul-searching, but most members of the Council used the words "open" and "frank" to characterize the discussion that took place.

Most members of the Council who spoke have also said that there is a need for transparency in our work. I think that if we were sitting on red seats, as spectators, we would realize that there is a bit of a dilemma here in that a discussion that takes place at the Princeton Club may be open and frank and candid for members of the Council, but it is hardly transparent for the general membership. They may also wonder why private individuals who are not representatives of Governments on the Security Council participate in such a discussion and they do not. I say this entirely in the spirit of knowing that we all wrestle with this dilemma every day.

There were also questions as to why we got what I think were called "background notes", rather than the briefing notes that members of the Secretariat used

when they briefed us. In my experience in the Council, whether the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations sits at the foot of the table in this Chamber or at the head of the table in the consultation room, he essentially says the same thing. So I am not sure that there is a problem here with the background notes being inadequate.

But inevitably it is the same dilemma over transparency and being candid and frank, and over how individuals who participate in this work because they represent Governments can ask questions and take positions — which indeed they must at times — that are not official positions of their Governments. Otherwise how do we explore what it is we are doing and try to understand the challenges? Because the work is not easy.

So I would say, on the one hand, our delegation is very grateful for the discussion that you, Sir, organized on the challenges of regional peacekeeping in Africa. At the same time, I think that we will continue to wrestle with this dilemma of transparency and our obligation to the general membership — which the United States delegation feels very strongly, as I believe all of us here do — and how we combine this with having discussions in which we, as individuals seeking the truth or seeking peace, are able to ask questions and make statements and test ideas without them being labelled "the representative of the United States said", or "the representative of Norway said". And this inevitably is a challenge to which there is no easy answer.

My final comment, I hope, will be brief. It was mentioned by the representative of Norway that it would be better at times if we were able to issue statements that were focused and short. This is a theme that, as we all know, is frequently repeated in the consultation room as we go over our work. I would just like to share a comment that was used by a United States humorist at the beginning of a letter he wrote about 100 years ago. He explained to his correspondent, "I have written you a long letter because I did not have time to write a short one".

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): If I can paraphrase Ambassador Hume's last comment, I will just make a short statement today because you, Sir, do not have time for me to make a long one.

It is good to have you here, Mr. Minister, and it is good to see the truly personal interest that you have taken during the last month, both in the work of the Council itself and in the Colombian presidency. We thank you for that, and we thank you also for the work that has been put in to the presidency by the Colombian delegation, which, as I said to you last night, has been an extremely competent, professional and inspired operation. I think there are some lessons we can all learn from you. One of them is the continued attention that the Colombian team has given to time management. This is something that Ambassador Greenstock has been very concerned that the Council try to do: to improve the way in which it allocates its time — which, inevitably, is limited. I think we must keep up the effort to make sure that we do things as efficiently, as effectively and as quickly as we can — consistent with getting a good result.

I think it is entirely reasonable that if there are procedural issues that need to be addressed, or problems that are perceived, then the informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions should be asked to look at them. But I would say only — as I said yesterday, during our session in the room next door — that it is only fair to our experts on that working group that we ensure that, before we ask them to set off on a particular journey, they are clear about exactly the problem they have to solve. I hope that next month the French presidency will be able to play a facilitating role in clarifying what needs to be done, by whom and when.

I would also like to join others in saying that I think these wrap-up discussions have been useful and are useful. I think that we learn from what we do, and occasions such as this are quite useful to that process. But I would just caution against us and those who are sitting on the red seats, as Ambassador Hume put it, thinking that everything is dreadful simply because we are engaging to a degree in a little exercise in self-examination. I think that in quite properly drawing the lessons from wrap-up meetings of this sort, we must also bear in mind what the Council has done, as well as what it might not have done or is not doing. So I would hope that we and the wider membership will look at what we do in various wrap-up meetings from that perspective. I think it is quite important both for ourselves and for the standing of the Council in the United Nations.

Let me address just a very few specific points. I appreciate Ambassador Wang's reference to Afghanistan. It is a point that has been picked by others, too. That was an important focus, I thought, and one important outcome of it was that the Council indicated that it was looking forward to receiving in October ideas from the Secretary-General on a comprehensive approach to Afghanistan, and that the Council would revert to them shortly afterwards. This is a very important issue, and it is certainly our hope that the Council will be able to take some fairly definitive action on Afghanistan as soon as we reasonably can, later in the autumn.

This brings me to a point that Ambassador Lavrov raised about the Council's prerogatives vis-à-vis itself and vis-à-vis the other organs of the United Nations. I would like to say here and now that as far my delegation is concerned we have no intention of working for a creeping extension of the Council's jurisdiction over other people's business. But as we move on through the list of the various items on our agenda it is clear that many of them are multidimensional; many of them have facets that are not the Council's traditional business, but that need to be addressed if those issues are going to be dealt with properly. Particularly as regards Afghanistan — not least since the Secretary-General himself has indicated that he believes the Council should be in the lead — I think it is incumbent on us to pick up that particular baton and run with it as the Secretary-General has asked.

I would also like to echo Mr. Kassé's point, which has been picked up by Ambassador Doutriaux and others, about the need for us to make sure we keep our relations with the troop-contributors in good order. As I have said in the consultation room, I believe it is most important that at this particular stage in the proceedings we make sure that resolution 1353 (2001) is implemented fully and conscientiously. I know from what Ambassador Doutriaux has said that the French presidency — and I am sure the Irish presidency following it — will have that dimension fully in mind this autumn as we work our way through the discussion of various peacekeeping operations.

Finally, as regards groups of friends, I only want to echo briefly what Ambassador Doutriaux said in response to Ambassador Ward's comment. We believe that groups of friends have a very useful role; they provide a way of doing what it is that we all have really been talking about under the larger heading of transparency, that is, involving delegations with a real interest in a subject a little more closely in the work of the Council. But equally — again, as I made clear yesterday — the members of groups of friends have a responsibility to behave correctly, responsively and openly with respect to Council members themselves. I do not want to enter into the substance of all this now. This is a topic that has been on our agenda for many months. But I think it was worth just saying these few sentences.

And with that, Mr. Minister, thank you again. Thank you for the presidency and thank you for the coffee.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his assessment of the work of the Council and, in particular, of the Colombian delegation's contribution.

I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Colombia.

I would like to thank the members of the Council for their constructive contributions and the positive attitude with which they participated in the debate on the agenda for the month of August. I also extend my thanks to the Secretariat team for their continued support throughout the month and for their professionalism.

I can also say that, thanks to the cooperation of the Council members, Colombia has achieved the four main objectives that it set for itself during its exercise of the presidency.

First, we have taken an important step in our consideration of the question of small arms in the Security Council. Following upon the open debate held on 2 August, we have adopted a presidential statement that incorporates the viewpoints of Council members and of the other Members of the United Nations who enthusiastically participated in the debate and made constructive proposals. This statement will guide the course of future positions which the Security Council will adopt on this topic.

Secondly, through the Princeton Club meeting, to which most of you referred, we promoted a debate on possibilities for and difficulties in a regional approach to conflict management in Africa, with special emphasis on West Africa and the Great Lakes region. Today it is my great pleasure to give all the members of

the Council, as promised, a final report that sets out the main aspects of the discussion. We have, of course, made enough copies for the countries that are with us today that are not members of the Council. We trust that this exercise will enhance the action of the Council and, in general, be a contribution to all United Nations bodies.

Thirdly, we have taken a first step towards a comprehensive approach by the Security Council to the situation of Afghanistan. Ambassador Valdivieso has told me that a very rich and closely focussed discussion was held during the informal consultations on 29 August. The discussions dealt with the elements of a comprehensive approach to the subject that will contribute to the non-paper being prepared by the Secretariat for October. We trust that this process will further a lasting political solution.

Fourthly, I would like to record my satisfaction at yesterday's interesting discussion on the report on the dialogue with the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, which was presented by the ambassadors of Bangladesh, the United Kingdom and Colombia. Colombia believes in the relations between this Council and the General Assembly, particularly regarding this topic to which the Members of the United Nations attach so much importance. We, of course, agree that it is important to move forward in keeping with the dates and the programme that have been described here.

I would also like to say that we have made a genuine effort here in favour of transparency of the Council's work. We have achieved this through detailed briefings to countries that are not members of the Council, by continually updating our Web page and through the willingness of all our delegates to offer replies to and cooperate with any Member of the Organization making a request. This open meeting is undoubtedly also a contribution to the goal of transparency, as many of you have indicated.

Let me further point out that one of the concerns which has motivated Colombia from the outset — and this was very aptly highlighted by the United Kingdom — has been a concern for managing the time of the Council and administering its work well. Hence the importance of being rigorous in keeping to the agenda but also flexible enough to cope with unexpected situations as they arise.

This, for instance, is what happened with regard to the situation in the Middle East. No provision had been made for it in the agenda, but it was taken up with the appropriate sense of urgency dictated by the magnitude of the crisis in the Middle East, which is of concern to all of us. Throughout the Council's open debate and the individual statements by members, there were opportunities for each country to express its position. There were also many non-members taking the floor. I think about 37 statements were made on this topic. We agree that the lack of any outcome points ultimately to the complexity of the issue and the particulars of the situation in the Middle East. But we do hope that the Council will be able to make a unified and strong contribution to this topic of great concern for the international community.

Responding to what most delegations have said here, I believe this wrap-up exercise has also met the goals that we had set for ourselves. The comments and suggestions for the work of the Council are undoubtedly very constructive contributions. They will enhance the rigorous nature of the Council's work. We hope that these recommendations will be used to bring about a general improvement in the Council's working methods, a topic that has been of concern not only to the Council, but to the membership of our Organization as a whole.

Since we anticipate no further unexpected events in the remainder of today, the last day of August, I would like to thank all of you for your cooperation and your work. I welcome France, in particular its Permanent Representative, Ambassador Levitte, and wish them all the best in the exercise of the presidency of the Council during the month of September.

I remember that when I first had the honour of presiding over the Council at the beginning of the month, we did not expect the work to be quite so intense. The weather in New York during this time was rather hot. I think it was the most humid month of the summer in New York. Today the weather is a little nicer, the forecast says that an autumn-like climate is on its way, and we hope that a more comfortable climate will also prevail within the Security Council.

I am grateful to all members for their comments relating to the Colombian Mission, headed by the ambassador. I am very proud to say that our delegation's entire team has worked hard, in close cooperation with members and with the Secretariat. I

trust that whatever contribution Colombia may have made to the specific issues that have been under consideration will be of benefit to the cause of international peace and security which is, without question, the principal mandate of this Council, as set out in the Charter.

The Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.